

MSc in Sustainability Management

Master Thesis

Professor: Ilija Sazdovski

Office hours: By appointment

Course Type: Compulsory

Credits: 9 ECTS

Term: 1st / 2nd / 3rd

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Course Description

The Master's Thesis (hereinafter MT) constitutes a key output of the learning process of the Master of Science in Sustainability Management (MScSM), as the student delves into a topic of interest and further develops the skills and abilities acquired.

This is a compulsory course of the program and it integrates the knowledge, competences, and skills acquired along the MSc in the form of an original project presented in a written form. The MT is a 9 ECTS course to be evaluated once the student has completed the master courses. The MT requires a total of 225 hours of individual student time workload. The work can be done in groups of up to 3 members.

Objectives (learning outcomes) and competences

According to the Official Memoria of the Master of Science in Sustainability Management, the learning outcomes and competences of the MT are the following:

Learning outcomes associated with the MT

1. It describes the procedures of specific and recognized regulations, such as ISO 9001 (quality management systems), ISO 14001 (environmental management systems) and ISO 45001 (occupational health and safety management systems).
2. Structure the development of integrated management systems that add value to the organization and are consistent with the strategic plan.
3. Build a coherent discourse on universal and current concepts around sustainability.
4. Applies the sustainable development goals to specific cases.
5. It examines how different companies, economic sectors and population entities assume the challenge of the SDGs in practice.

Competences associated with the MT

Basic competences

6. Possess and understand knowledge that provides a foundation or opportunity to be original in the development and/or application of ideas, often in a research context.
7. The students know how to apply the knowledge acquired and their ability to solve problems in new or little-known environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their area of study
8. The students can integrate knowledge and face the complexity of formulating

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judgments based on information that, being incomplete or limited, includes reflections on the social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgments.

9. The students know how to communicate their conclusions and the knowledge and ultimate reasons that support them to specialized and non-specialized audiences in a clear and unambiguous way.

10. The students have the learning skills that allow them to continue studying in away that will be largely self-directed or autonomous.

General competences

1. Analyse from an environmental and corporate social responsibility perspective the strategic policy to carry out proposals and evaluations for improvement and communication.

2. Explain the tools that motivate and empower professionals to participate in the sustainable turn and the tools to study the perception and behaviour of consumers and citizens.

3. Apply the necessary mechanisms and regulatory framework to face environmental, economic, and social challenges in the context of a globalized market.

Transversal competences

1. Adopt attitudes and behaviours in accordance with ethical and responsible professional practice.

2. Use and apply information and communication technologies in the academic and professional fields.

3. Develop the ability to assess inequalities based on sex and gender to design solutions.

Specific competences

1. Draw up the plans to be able to apply in the organization the quality accreditation systems established by International Organizations in congruence with the sector, as well as the main benchmark initiatives in sustainability.

2. Interpret the fundamental concepts of global sustainability and be able to transmit them to all levels of the organization, to provide context for the challenges of the ecological transition.

3. Analyse the different environmental impacts generated by human activities, anthropogenic causes, and the consequences on health, the environment, and natural resources.

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4. Apply environmental impact quantification tools at the product and organization levels.
5. Analyse the economic viability and business opportunities of the actions that the organization can carry out in the environmental and social fields.
6. Analyse the implications that the ecological transition and the new circular economy imply, at the different levels of an organization and the associated change processes.
7. Analyse the positive and negative social impacts produced by the organization and its products or services.
8. Apply the tools for identifying and interpreting the opinions that different stakeholders, especially consumers, have of our organization and products.
9. Train to draw conclusions that allow to contribute some new aspects to the field of knowledge of sustainability, and more specifically to the life cycle perspective, corporate social responsibility, or sustainable finance.

COURSE LEARNING PLAN

Methodology

Organization

The development of the MT is organized by the MT Coordinator and details of the functioning of the course are further specified in the **MT instruction**, uploaded in e-Campus before the beginning of the program. Each MT will be undertaken following the directions of the MT Supervisor, specific to each group, which will be appointed by the MSc Academic Committee. The evaluation of the MT will be the responsibility of the MT Evaluation Committee. The MT students will be responsible for proactively pursuing the MT, putting forward any difficulties, and fulfilling the administrative procedures.

Student's duties

The MT may be realized in groups of up to 3 students. Carrying out group work facilitates putting transversal skills into practice, and preparing for teamwork in professional environments (negotiating, defending their arguments, managing possible friction and/or conflicts, etc.). Given the transversality of sustainability, the diversity of origins of the master's students, and their limited professional experience, realizing the MT in groups is encouraged.

The students will have to comply with the main following duties:

- a) Present "MT student proposal" form to define the proposed topic/group by the deadline set.
- b) Sign and present the "MT project agreement form" signed by the Supervisor assigned to the MT project by the set deadline.
- c) Produce two "MT progress reports": Students shall inform about the progress of work

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by uploading these reports to e-Campus by the set deadline.

- d) Communicate any difficulty experienced during the development of the MT. The first instance will be the MT Supervisor. In case of major difficulties, these will have to be also communicated to the MT Coordinator.
- e) By the MT submission date, students have to submit the following three items:
 - The final version of the “master thesis document” following the template provided (1 per group)
 - The “MT co-evaluation document” of the group peers’ contribution (individual)
 - The “MT individual learning report” on the student’s contribution and learning process during the MT (individual)

The submission of these three elements is unitary and failure to submit any of those will result in the student failing the course.

Hours devoted by the student (according to ECTS): **225**

Evaluation criteria

Despite students may work in their MT in groups, grades are individual to each student. That is, the members of a given group can get different grades if there is evidence of different effort, involvement, and results.

All members of the group will be requested to cross-evaluate their peers and to produce a memo reflecting on their personal learning experience while working on the MT. The MT will have to be publicly and orally presented for its evaluation. The final grade will take into consideration the oral defence, the final written report as well as the co-evaluation, the evaluation of the individual student reports and the evaluation of the MT Supervisor.

Students need to hand in two progress reports during the year to inform the MT Coordinator of the progress of their thesis and their coordination meetings with the Supervisor. For the MT to be presented and defended, the Supervisor needs to authorize it. The Supervisor is also expected to provide formal feedback on the group’s effort and the MT final project quality.

Learning outcomes are to be assessed according to a collective evaluation model that encourages individual learning as well as the interpersonal ability to work in groups. The evaluation system will be based on the following elements.

- a) 20% Continuous assessment considering:
 - Attendance to sessions and the proper submission of all required reports
 - Evaluation by the MT Supervisor, considering the individual and co-evaluation reports as well as the development of the MT during the whole academic year.

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- b) 60% Final written work, considering the following criteria:
- Originality, motivation, and relevance
 - Appropriate use of research methods and sources
 - Results obtained, discussion and conclusions presented
 - Written style and clarity of exposition
- c) 20% Oral presentation, by assessing the clarity of exposition and the ability to answer the questions formulated by the evaluation committee.

All the members of the group will be required to participate in the presentation. The Evaluation Committee can designate which member of an MT group has to answer each of the questions that are formulated, to verify the competences acquired and, where appropriate, to establish grade differentiation.

The ordinary period for the defence of the MT will be at the end of June or early July. In case of failing the masterthesis in the regular examination, a unique retake of the MT course will be programmed before the end of September.

- A. If all members of a group fail the MT in the regular examination, the entire group shall be asked to re-submit a new master thesis at a date before September 15th. The new submission can be about an entirely new topic, although it is also possible to resubmit a complete revision of the project presented in the regular evaluation, only if this is explicitly authorized by the Evaluation Committee. In any case, the new submission must meet all the regular criteria set for the MT.
- B. If MT is developed in a group, the MT project receives a passing grade, but some individual members of the group do not pass the course, the student(s) who has(ve) failed will be asked to prepare a 10-page (excluding appendices) individual paper. The new work shall be an original contribution that either extends the submitted master thesis in the regular evaluation, e.g. focusing on one of the dimensions of the project or extending the analysis to a different topic, area, or an entirely new project about international business that shows the student has acquired the contents, skills and competences of the program.

In both cases:

- The Academic Committee will appoint a Supervisor for the new project.
- The MT Coordinator will communicate to the Supervisor and student/s the specific conditions of the retake (set by the Evaluation Committee) as well as the calendar of the re-submittal and the defence (if required), and publishing of the final MT grades.
- The new submission must take place before mid-September and the new defence (if required by the Evaluation Committee) before the last week of September.

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Bio of Professor

Ilija Sazdovski is finalizing his Ph.D. thesis in the field of circular aspects of materials, directed by Dr. Pere Fullana-i-Palmer at the UNESCO Chair in Life Cycle and Climate Change ESCI-UPF. His thesis aims to propose methodological improvements to the life cycle assessment methodology by involving the principles of the circular economy.

Between 2012 and 2018, he was part of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Conference for Sustainable Development of Energy, Water and Environmental Systems. He holds a B.Sc. in mathematics and physics and an M.Sc. in ecological economics.

He is an experienced researcher, and he has authored numerous technical reports, strategies, and conference and scientific papers

Reading Materials/ Bibliography/Resources

The associated documentation, reading materials, etc. will be provided throughout the course.